

Congressman

Henry A. Waxman

K E E P I N G I N T O U C H

November 1995



KEEPI NG IN TOUCH

November 1995



*"Those who cannot remember the past
are condemned to repeat it."*

George Santayana

Dear Friend:

As I write to you about this session of Congress, I can't help but think back to 1981.

At that time, the budget deficit was the key issue, just as it is now. From 1977 to 1981, the annual deficit averaged \$57 billion and our total national debt was almost \$1 trillion.

The country wanted change and voted Ronald Reagan and a new Republican Senate majority into power. Change came. President Reagan's budget plan — cutting taxes, increasing military spending, and relying on a "trickle-down" economic theory to raise productivity and reduce the deficit — was enacted despite warnings of "voodoo economics" and a "riverboat gamble."

You know what happened next. Deficits exploded. By 1983, the annual deficit reached \$207 billion, and by 1990 our total debt mushroomed to \$3.2 trillion. Assigning blame for this budgetary debacle isn't the issue; but remembering that simple solutions sometimes have devastating consequences is imperative.

The riverboat gamble we embarked on in 1981 affects every funding decision Congress makes today. The debt we've accumulated influences how much we can spend on health care, environmental protection, education, police, and programs for the needy.

The year 1981 is on my mind because new proposals — advocated in the name of change, and without a substantive foundation — are again being rushed to votes without hearings and without any understanding of the potential consequences.

The laws the new Republican majority is voting to eliminate or to weaken — including Medicare, Medicaid, the Clean Water Act, the Earned Income Tax Credit — provide common-sense help to millions of Americans. We have change, but once again it is going too far and it now threatens our most fundamental health and safety protections.

Should we cut waste and make sure that government programs are as effective as possible? You bet. That's a fundamental obligation Congress owes you and every other American. Can we do so while still insisting on a clean environment, honoring our commitment to seniors, and extending a hand to the disabled, children, and others in need? We must. Thank you for your interest, and please keep me informed of your thoughts.

Sincerely,

Henry A. Waxman

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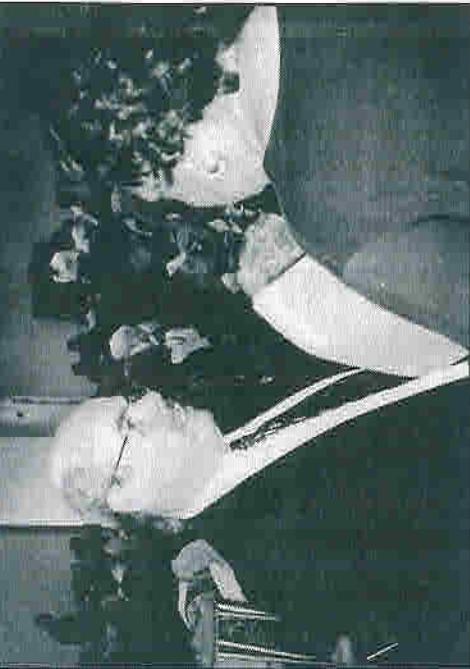


Photo by Lisa A. Dixon

More than 300 concerned citizens participated in an October community forum. Rep. Waxman listened to their concerns on the Republican Medicare and Medicaid legislation.

CONGRESS GUTS HEALTH

MEDICARE UNDER ATTACK

NEWT GINGRICH ON MEDICARE...

"Now, we don't get rid of it in Round One because we don't think that that's politically smart and we don't think that's the right way to go through a transition. But we think it's going to wither on the vine..."

The Washington Post, October 26, 1995.

MEDICARE WORKS. In 1959, only 46% of seniors had health coverage; today, 99% have coverage. In the late 1960s, 30% of seniors lived in poverty; today, the poverty rate for seniors is under 15%.

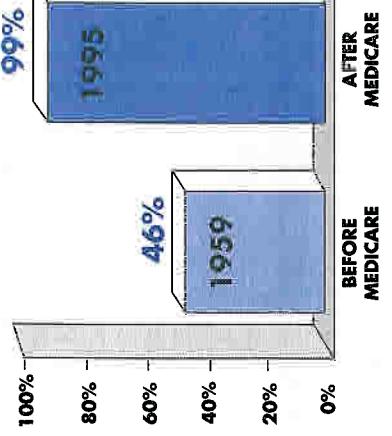
MEDICARE'S PROBLEM. The Medicare trustees annually examine the program's financial health; on eight separate occasions over the last 25 years, the trust fund has been projected to be insolvent in 7 years or less. In each instance Congress and the President enacted routine adjustments to keep the program on track. The latest report notes that the Trust Fund again faces constraints and needs \$90 billion in savings through 2005.

THE WRONG CURE. On October 19, House Republicans passed legislation that goes far beyond the Trustees' \$90 billion recommendation (H.R. 2425). This bill would:

- **Slash** \$270 billion from Medicare.
- **Inflict** large premium increases on seniors and make it easier for doctors to charge them more.
- **Weaken** the program's regulations that curb fraud and abuse. Prohibitions against kickbacks and requirements that medical facilities submit accurate claims would be relaxed.
- **Take away** many seniors' right to choose their own doctor and force many into a low priced, low quality HMO.

The Medicare program can be reformed without taking these extreme steps. Before deep cuts are made, we should enact tougher provisions to crack down on fraud and abuse. I voted against the Republican bill because it takes the wrong approach—it cuts first and makes fraud easier.

Seniors With Health Coverage



Source: Congressional Quarterly, 4/28/81. Socio Security Administration.

Prepared by the House Democratic Caucus and House Democratic Policy Committee, 7/95.

Sen. Bob Dole, who voted against the Medicare program when it was created in 1965, recently said "I was there, fighting the fight, voting against Medicare...because we knew it would not work in 1965." The Senator is wrong—Medicare has been a national success.

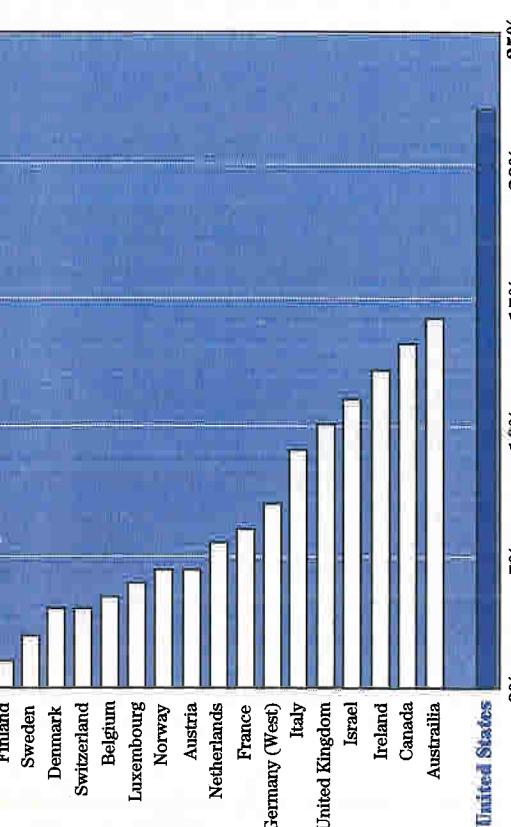
The Washington Post, October 26, 1995



Photo credit Dennis Brack

MEDICAID FACING REPEAL

Child Poverty Rates in 18 Countries



Source: Center for the Study of Population, Poverty, and Public Policy, August 1995.

The Medicaid program is a safety net for 4 million poor elderly, 6 million disabled Americans, and 18 million poor children. On October 26, the House majority passed legislation, H.R. 2491, to repeal this program.

I voted against this bill because it would:

- Eliminate quality standards for nursing home care. These standards have prohibited the once common practices of drugging, beating, and strapping nursing home patients into beds.
- Eliminate coverage for seniors with Alzheimer's Disease.
- Eliminate coverage for women with breast cancer.
- Eliminate guaranteed assistance to poor children so that they receive preventive medical services and necessary care.
- Eliminate guaranteed assistance for poor seniors in paying Medicare premiums.

ND ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

ENVIRONMENTAL SETBACKS

Clean Water

I voted against H.R. 961, which would roll back years of progress in cleaning up U.S. waters and has a direct impact on Santa Monica Bay. H.R. 961, which passed the House on May 16, would:

- Relieve local government of its obligation to treat sewage it dumps into the Bay.
- Relieve almost all cities of their obligation to reduce their discharge of untreated stormwater and urban runoff (including pesticides, heavy metals, bacteria, and human viruses) into the Bay.
- Strip EPA of its authority to oversee dredging, which can contaminate the waters by digging up pollutants that are continually discharged into the Bay.

Los Angeles residents have voted twice by overwhelming margins to stop the dumping of poorly treated sewage into Santa Monica Bay. H.R. 961 would destroy the Santa Monica Bay as a magnificent site for recreation and unparalleled natural beauty.

Endangered Species

H.R. 2275, legislation that would eviscerate the Endangered Species Act, was

approved by the House Resources Committee on October 12. It would "so weaken the Endangered Species Act as to leave little more than the name." (Washington Post, October 23, 1995).

Pesticides

I have worked for years to strengthen our pesticide laws. Now the Republican majority wants legislation to allow more pesticides in food (H.R. 1627). The bill that I am sponsoring (H.R. 1771) would implement the National Academy of Sciences' recommendations for tougher safety standards, including special safeguards for children, who are especially vulnerable to pesticide exposure.

The New York Times

House of Environmental Horrors

When the House of Representatives passed an appropriations bill last week gutting two of the nation's basic environmental laws, President Clinton rose up in a rare display of fury. He denounced the bill as a "stealth attack on our environment in the guise of a budget bill" and a "polluters' protection act."

These were true and necessary words. They came, however, from a president who can have no serious claim to environmental leadership — a president who began his term by underestimating the conservationist ideas of Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and, just one week ago and without any public regard, signed a budget bill that will increase destructive logging on Federal lands.

At this time Mr. Clinton must be as good as his words and deliver on his promises. Unless there is a sudden attack of contrition sense in the Senate, he could well be the nation's last, best hope to reverse the House's reckless effort to dismantle a generation of bipartisan legislation aimed at improving air and water quality and preserving what's left of the American landscape.

To understand how important it is for Mr. Clinton to hold his ground, it is first necessary to appreciate what the Republicans and their Democratic allies have achieved in six short months.

Last spring, in the name of "regulatory reform," the House passed a bill mandating so many layers of administrative and judicial review as to destroy Washington's ability to promulgate any needed environmental rules. Then it re-enacted the original Clean Water Act of 1972, easing pollution controls for cities and industry, imposing the Great Lakes to further degradation, shifting enforcement responsibilities to the states and offering up at least half the nation's wetlands to development.

These new rules in the House leave nothing to chance. This, last Monday, they approved an approp-

riations bill with a set of killer amendments that cut the Environmental Protection Agency's budget by one-third. The cuts were specifically designed to deny the E.P.A. the money it needs to enforce longstanding laws governing water and air pollution. This is called "legislation by appropriation." The Republican leadership did not invent this tactic but, it has unleashed it, on America's air and land with dramatic intent.

If there is any consolation here, it is that some Republicans are having second thoughts. With each successive vote, the leadership's margin of victory has shrunk. In the earlier votes on deregulation and clean water, the moderates were practically invisible. On the appropriations bill, 56 Republicans joined their masters and, with Democratic help, came within one vote of victory.

There were two reasons for this. Many Republicans who voted last May to eviscerate the Clean Water Act renounced their vote over the Memorial Day weekend to thank their constituents in a state of fury. Second, recent polls have shown that while Americans regard themselves as over-regulated, they are dead set against crippling the laws that have brought them cleaner air and water.

These expressions of public dismay have come too late to stop the House's brilliantly executed blitzkrieg. But perhaps some savings will be sufficient in the Senate and, let us pray, in the White House. The Senate is still debating a regulatory bill. It has yet to begin writing its own version of the Clean Water Act. It must answer the House's appropriations bill with one of its own. In all three cases, it has a glorious chance to undo the House's crime. Handwork.

But if the Senate fails, then all this posturing

garbage will fall on Bill Clinton's desk, presenting him with possibly one last opportunity to stand up

to environmental stewardship.

June 15, 1995 OUTLOOK

Waxman called tops on green issues

SCORECARD

100%

Watchdog group CALPIRG gave

U.S. senator and representatives a

score to reflect how they voted on

major environmental and consumer

protection issues:

Rep. Henry Waxman

100% of THE TIMES

Environmental Amnesia

"(T)he current Republican Congress, driven by the anti-regulatory odor of newcomers from the Mountain in West, has mounted an attack on years of bipartisan environmental and parkland achievements...For California, a major case in point is that of the Mojave National Preserve, approved as a national park last year by Congress...The interior appropriations bill removes funding for the preserve and returns control of the land to its former administrator, the federal Bureau of Land Management. President Clinton has promised to veto the bill for this and other environmental reasons."

Excerpt from the LA Times—October 25, 1995

THE CLEAN AIR ACT IS WORKING

Since 1970, pollution from cars has been cut by 97%, large industrial polluters have reduced emissions by 80%, and lead emissions have dropped by 98%. In L.A. our Stage One days (severe air pollution) are down from 83 in the 1980's to 13 this year. We're on track to make Stage One days history.

But...

Rep. Tom DeLay is the House Republican Whip, the third most powerful member of the Republican majority. He is sponsoring a bill (H.R. 479) that would repeal the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. Action on this issue is expected next year.

August 7, 1995

August 7, 1995

TOBACCO AND OUR KIDS

Reporters sometimes ask why I've worked so hard to curb the power of the cigarette companies and reduce the number of kids who smoke.

Here's the answer:

- More children will die from tobacco use than from any other single cause—including AIDS, alcohol, car accidents, murders, suicides, illegal drugs, and fires **combined**.
- Child smoking rates are rising. The number of eighth graders who smoke increased 30% between 1991 and 1994.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics has called teenage smoking a “pediatric disease.” The average teenage smoker begins at 14 1/2 years old.
- The tobacco companies spend over \$6 billion a year on advertisements, and 85% of the children who smoke use one of the three most heavily advertised brands (Marlboro, Camel, or Newport).
- More than 80% of all adult smokers began smoking before turning 18.
- Over 400,000 Americans die each year from tobacco-related illnesses.



Photo credit: Lee Anderson

The single most important public health step we can take is to prevent another generation of Americans from becoming addicted to cigarettes and nicotine. That's something worth working for. I strongly support President Clinton's proposal to limit tobacco marketing and sales to children.

What's Wrong With This Picture?



Theresa McKenna and other senior citizens were promptly arrested when they tried to testify before Congress. The seniors tried to make their voices heard because the new majority wouldn't allow a single hearing on its far-reaching Medicare proposal.

**Congressman
Henry A. Waxman**
SPECIAL REPORT

- MEDICARE AND MEDICAID
- ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
- TOBACCO AND KIDS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Official Business
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Henry A. Waxman
M.C.
Bulk Rate
Car-Tr. Presort